

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers May 16, 2005

### NETS Feature

#### **Ad Campaign Warns Motorists the Heat Is On---Buckle Up or Pay Up—Click It Or Ticket**

A two-week state and national “buckle up” advertising blitz warning motorists of increased enforcement efforts heats up today, announced the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP). The federally funded initiative forewarns of the Memorial Day safety belt enforcement effort, which begins May 23 and runs through June 5, 2005. For more information on how your business or organization can promote OHSP’s Safe Summer Campaign, please link to: [http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593\\_3504-115877--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504-115877--,00.html)

#### **Road Check 2005 Is June 7-9**

Road Check 2005, the 18th annual international truck and motorcoach safety and security event will take place on June 7-9. Sponsored by the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), Road Check is a 72-hour commercial motor vehicle and driver inspection program that takes place throughout North America. Participating organizations include the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, Transport Canada, Transportation Security Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation in Mexico. ...more:  
[http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/check\\_051505feat.asp](http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/check_051505feat.asp)

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **Report: Traffic Congestion Growing Across The Nation**

According to the Texas Transportation Institute’s 2005 Urban Mobility Report, traffic congestion is growing across the nation, despite slow growth in jobs and travel, costing Americans \$63.1 billion a year. The report measures traffic congestion trends from 1982 to 2003. The Institute reports that if today’s higher fuel prices are factored in, the cost jumps an additional \$1.7 billion. View the report at [http://tti.tamu.edu/documents/mobility\\_report\\_2005\\_wappx.pdf](http://tti.tamu.edu/documents/mobility_report_2005_wappx.pdf)

#### **Automakers Upgrade The Steering Wheel**

Steering wheels aren’t just for steering anymore. They’re increasingly becoming the place to install more control buttons—from tuning car radios to air conditioning. Automakers say the steering wheel control buttons help motorists keep their hands and fingers on the wheel instead of having to fiddle with dashboard dials and knobs, making driving safer. Read the full article at [http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2005-04-25-steer-usat\\_x.htm#](http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2005-04-25-steer-usat_x.htm#)

#### **Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes Involving Soldiers Alarms The Military**

The Army and other branches of the military are responding to the recent rise of fatal motor vehicle crashes involving soldiers, many just back from war. From October 2003 to September 2004, when troops first returned in large numbers from Iraq, 132 soldiers died in crashes—a 28 percent jump from the previous 12 months. The deaths continue and in the past seven months 80 soldiers died in crashes—a 23 percent increase from the same period a year earlier. According to some Army officials and psychiatrists who are working to prevent these crashes, many of the soldiers return from war

feeling invincible and take this emotion out on the roadways with deadly results. Read the full article at [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-05-02-soldiers-accidents-cover\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-05-02-soldiers-accidents-cover_x.htm)

### **Lessons Learned From Winter 2005**

All of Canada and 70 percent of the United States' roadways are located in snowy regions, or areas with 5 or more inches of snow annually. Several of these cities received "Best Practices" listings for their winter maintenance by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Among them Aurora, Colorado was cited for its use of GPS, which allowed managers to determine which routes have been plowed, whether the plow's blade is up or down, and whether a vehicle's spreader is being used. Charlotte, North Carolina was praised for its computerized traffic light system that allowed officials to retune signals during winter storms to slow traffic. For more information visit <http://www.betterroads.com/articles/apr05d.htm>

### **Properly Inflated Tires Improves Fuel Efficiency**

With gasoline prices reaching record highs this spring and as experts predicting even higher prices during the summer travel season, Goodyear is warning consumers that under-inflated tires could cost them at the pump. According to tire manufacturers, running tires 20 percent under-inflated—only 5 to 7 pounds per square inch (psi)—can increase fuel consumption by 10 percent. The Rubber Manufacturer's Association reports that 85 percent of drivers don't check their tire pressure properly and two-thirds of drivers don't even know where to find recommended proper tire inflation pressure for their vehicles' tires. Read the release at <http://www.automotive.com/news/25/12010/index.html>

### **New Study Finds 1 in 3 Drivers Admit To Running Red Lights**

According to a report from Farmer's Insurance, 36 percent of drivers admitted to running red lights last year. Seven of the drivers polled admitted to being serial red-light runners, blowing through 20 or more a year. Some experts argue that extending the yellow light could prevent red-light running. For example, in Mesa, Arizona, extending the yellow light cut violations by 6 percent. Read the release at [http://www.farmers.com/FarmComm/WebSite/html/media\\_center/Jan\\_25\\_05.html](http://www.farmers.com/FarmComm/WebSite/html/media_center/Jan_25_05.html)

### **Ford, Microsoft Join Forces**

Microsoft Corp. and Ford Motor Co. are joining forces to develop software that enables cars to fix themselves and ultimately avoid crashes. The new partnership announced its plan to rely on new technology including high-definition screens, speech recognition technology, cameras, digital calendars, and advanced navigation equipment to set itself apart from the competition. Read the full article at <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory?id=716515&CMP=OTC-RSSFeeds0312>

### **'Safety Stops' In Washington, DC Raise Doubts**

Since 2002, police officers in Washington, DC have conducted traffic safety checkpoints in the hopes of reducing crime and increasing traffic enforcement. The practice involves recording the personal information—including name, address, time and location of the stop—of violators, law-abiding citizens, and in some cases passengers. The information is fed into a database that is linked to a computer containing the arrest records and mug shots of criminals. Proponents say that the database can provide critical intelligence information for police detectives. However, some civil liberties advocates and citizens say that the practice is an invasion of privacy. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/01/AR2005050100848.html>

### **Study: Marijuana Use Increases Crash Risk**

A recent study investigated the relationship between marijuana use prior to driving, habitual marijuana use, and crash injury. The researchers found that habitual use of marijuana is strongly associated with crash injury. However, the nature of the relationship between marijuana use and risk-taking is unclear. Source: Addiction Authors: S. Blows, R.Q. Ivers, J. Connor, S. Ameratunga, M. Woodward, and R. Norton

### **Black Box Helps Charge Driver With Murder**

A Michigan driver is being charged with murder after his vehicle's event data recorder—commonly referred to as a black box—revealed that his SUV was going 70 mph when it struck another car, killing all three occupants. According to newspaper reports, the driver was intoxicated when his vehicle struck another car carrying a mother and her two sons. The impact of the crash sent their vehicle into oncoming traffic causing a four-car crash and ultimately killing the occupants. The black box recorded the immediate five seconds preceding the crash and there was no indication that the driver applied the brakes.

### **Safety Advocates Call For Standards To Prevent Back-Over Deaths**

According to safety advocates, about 100 people were accidentally backed over and killed last year. Now, automakers and the government are being urged to require rear visibility standards. A Consumer Reports study last year found that some vehicles have rear blind spots as deep as 50 feet, with larger trucks and vans generally worse than cars. Automakers have introduced new technology such as sensors and rear-viewing mirrors to minimize blind spots. Meanwhile, NHTSA is preparing a regulation that would establish backup safety standards for large, commercial-sized trucks. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0504/29/A08-166283.htm>

### **Stability Control Expected To Be Standard Feature**

Electronic stability control (ESC) systems may soon be standard on all cars. General Motors Co. recently announced its plans to equip all of its cars and trucks sold in the United States and Canada with ESC by 2010. Now, other carmakers are expected to follow suit. ESC uses sensors to determine a driver's intended path. If the vehicle is not going where the driver wants it to, ESC automatically adjusts the braking to correct driver error. Recent studies by NHTSA and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have confirmed that ESC reduces crash rates.

### **Study: Non-Helmet Use Increases Risk Of Death Among Motorcyclists**

A Wisconsin study set out to examine the relationships among helmet-use by motorcyclists, alcohol use, and the full spectrum of health consequences following crashes. The researchers concluded that motorcyclists who die in a crash are less likely to wear helmets and are more likely to sustain head or face injuries. Alcohol use was also associated with unhelmeted riding and increased the risk of serious injury.

Source: Wisconsin Medical Society Authors: C. Auter, S. Zhu, S. Allen, S. Hargarten, and P.M. Layde

### **Pedestrians Find Crosswalk Signals Confusing**

National surveys report that up to 80 percent of pedestrians don't understand traditional "Walk/Don't Walk" signals. And recent research suggests that the confusion gets worse with the installation of new crosswalk signals, including those with digital numbers that give a countdown to pedestrians. Tested around the country, officials in Daytona Beach believe the new signals are safer and provide more information for pedestrians and are testing them at various intersections. However, recent tests in California and Minnesota indicate the new signals may further confuse pedestrians. Read the full article at <http://www.news-journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/News/WestVolusia/03WV01WEST01050305.htm>

## News from USDOT

### **GAO Examines NHTSA's New Car Assessment Program**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report examining how the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) New Car Assessment Program crash tests vehicles, rates their safety, and reports the results to the public. It also assesses how NHTSA's program compares to other programs that crash test vehicles and report results to the public. Among its findings, the GAO suggested the government upgrade its crash test program to remain relevant as new vehicles, such as SUVs, alter safety risks. View the report at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05370.pdf>

### **NHTSA's "The ABCs Of BAC" Now Available**

NHTSA recently released a new brochure, entitled "The ABCs of BAC." The brochure educates the general public about the effects of alcohol on the body. It outlines the factors that affect Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC), as well as the predictable effects BAC has on driving. The brochure has now been posted. It is available at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/ABCsBACWeb/index.htm>.

### **New Report Analyses Crash Data By Month, Day Of The Week**

NHTSA published a new technical report entitled, "Trend and Pattern Analysis of Highway Crash Fatalities by Month and Day." The objective of the study was to examine the trends and patterns of traffic fatalities by month, day, and day of the week between 1975-2002. The report indicates that the trend and pattern of traffic crash fatalities vary significantly, depending on the particular month, day, and day of week. According to the report, monthly fatalities peak during the months of July and August, and the four deadliest days on the road were July 4, July 3, December 23 and December 24. For the full report visit <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/ncsa/Rpts/2005/809855.pdf>.

## Work-Life:

### **Study Confirms: Children Safest In Back Seat, Properly Buckled Up**

A new study confirms that children are safer in car crashes when they are in the back seat and are less likely to be injured when safety seats and seat belts are used. The study, sponsored by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm Insurance Company, found that children were 40 percent safer in the back seat than the front in crashes, and the risk of injury dropped to less than 2 percent when safety seats and seat belts were used. Furthermore, researchers say that the combination of seating in rear seats and using restraints would have prevented more than 1,000 of the 3,665 serious crash injuries to children under 16. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2005/autosinsider/0505/02/autos-168163.htm>

### **Study: Teen Drivers Mimic Parents' Driving Styles, Behaviors**

A new study at the Bar-Ilan University in Israel found that the driving styles of young drivers closely mimic their parents' habits. The research showed a strong gender link between young drivers. Boys tended to imitate their fathers' driving style, and to a lesser extent, similarities were also noted between mothers and daughters. Underscoring the study's findings, previous research in the United States has found that children whose parents have been convicted of traffic offenses are more likely to have committed an offense themselves. Read the full article at: <http://www.israel21c.org/bin/en.jsp?enZone=Democracy&enDisplay=view&enPage=BlankPage&enDisPWhat=object&enDispWho=Articles%5EI977>



## **International Traffic Safety News:**

### **Aussie Survey Reveals Community Attitudes To Road Safety**

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has released a report documenting the findings from its latest survey of community attitudes to road safety. The survey examined issues including perceived causes of road crashes, exposure and attitudes to random breath testing, attitudes to speed, perceptions of police enforcement, reported usage of seat belts, involvement in road crashes, and experience of fatigue while driving. View the report at <http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/res-exec/cr224ex.cfm>

### **Report Examines Older Driver Crashes**

A new Australian research report examines patterns in crash responsibility for older drivers by analyzing national fatality data, insurance and crash records. According to the report, older drivers involved in crashes are about 1.5 times more likely to be judged responsible for crashes than those in other age groups. View the report at

<http://www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au/script/Details.asp?docn=AS863654258345>

### **Yemen Recognizes Unified Arab Traffic Week**

Officials in Yemen kicked off "Unified Arab Traffic Week" on May 4th, under the motto "Safety of Pedestrians, National Obligation & Common Responsibility." The year's observations included activities at schools, institutes, and universities. In addition, symposiums, lectures, and meetings were also conducted. In 2004, Yemen experienced 12,257 traffic incidents, killing 2,249 and seriously injuring 5,943. These increasing number of incidents are quickly becoming recognized as a serious problem for Yemen. Read the full article at <http://yementimes.com/article.shtml?i=839&p=front&a=4>

### **Insurance Co.: Pay-As-You-Go Insurance Performing Well**

Norwich Union, a UK-based insurance company testing the pay-as-you-go insurance policy, reports that the new model is performing well. The insurer's two-year study uses global positioning systems to track the trips made by drivers. Information about the actual distance traveled is then transmitted directly to the insurer and the motorist is charged for their insurance premium accordingly. The pay-as-you-go system has proven beneficial for certain types of drivers, including those who do not use their car very often and young drivers, who are typically charged high premiums for short, low risk journeys.

### **New Radar Gun Being Tested In The UK**

A modified radar gun to detect and fine speeding motorists is being tested in the UK, in the hopes of appeasing those motorists who suspect they have been wrongly accused or are booked for someone else's offense. The hand-held speed guns, which are linked to GPS and data systems, record the exact time, date, and location that motorists are caught speeding. Read the full article at

[http://www.thesundaymail.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5936,15135979%5E2765,00.html](http://www.thesundaymail.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5936,15135979%5E2765,00.html)

### **UK Fleets Change In At-Work Crash Reporting Policies**

The UK's Health and Safety Commission is launching a major review of the way workplace injuries are reported, which could force companies to provide details of how many of their drivers have been involved in motor vehicle crashes. The data would be used to create a detailed picture of injuries caused by at-work traffic crashes, and would encourage employers to improve their health and safety policies. The review comes amid a push to improve work-related road safety, including a Corporate Manslaughter Bill and the decision by police to record whether drivers involved in a crash were on a business or private journey. However, despite these initiatives, new research shows that companies are still failing to treat company fleet policies as a boardroom issue.

### **UK License Checks Reveal Illegal Drivers, Common Offenses**

According to new research by the RAC Business Solution, license checks carried out by UK fleets revealed that a number of staff members are driving illegally. The results found that many employees have been banned from driving, only have a provisional license, or are not licensed to drive the category of vehicle that their job requires. The license checks found speeding and alcohol impaired driving to be the leading offenses. The License Bureau recommends companies introduce a license checking policy that increases the frequency of checks depending on a driver's record, instead of simply examining all licenses every six months.

### **Speed Cameras Fail To Prevent Roadway Deaths In The UK**

According to the latest UK government figures, speed cameras are failing to reduce the number of roadway deaths, however, the number of fines issued to motorists through speed cameras has surged dramatically. The number of road deaths has remained fairly static over the past 10 years in the UK, dipping slightly from 3,814 in 1993 to 3,508 in 2003. However, during the same period, those caught speeding on cameras has skyrocketed to two million a year. In 2003, 79 percent of British speeding convictions were from speed cameras. Officials claim the speed cameras are designed to make roads safer, yet critics claim that there is no correlation between their increased use and improved road safety.

### **UK Fleets Called To Action**

Delegates at a recent duty of care seminar were told that they must be prepared to make themselves 'unpopular' if they are to run a safe and efficient company car policy. Attending fleet executives were given an outline of the fleet decision maker's role that will ensure companies meet their duty of care obligations to at-work drivers. The outline called on fleet executives to implement risk measurements for risk management/road safety, establish a climate for a risk management policy, nominate board members, and establish a comprehensive road safety policy supported by management.